

Pakistan Counterterrorism Strategy and Military Operations Against Terrorism 2020-2025

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism remain one of the major security risk for Pakistan in past few years. Regional dynamics after 2021 severely impacted the country internal security condition this has implications for counterterrorism policies and military operations. The article examines the counterterrorism policy and military activities in the period between 2020 and 2025 the policy dynamics of adapting to the evolving security situation and revival of terrorism post 2021. It is a qualitative study based on secondary sources upon which the research is made academic articles, government report, policy documents, and policy analysis by credible news sources to evaluate the counterterrorism framework of Pakistan. The findings have shown that Pakistan has shifted its previous pattern of running the military operations in large scale to the intelligence based operations and the target counterterrorism operations. Among the major security threats are militant groups such as, Tarik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan (ISIS-K) and Baloch Insurgents. The National Counter Terrorism Authority, the Radd-ul-Fasaad and Azm-e-istehkam operations have played a key role in reducing terrorist activities and improving internal security yet the issue continues along the borders and conflict affected regions. The findings of the research lead to the conclusion that the counterterrorism policy in Pakistan is now more intelligence based and dynamic but the long term peace and stability require more active policy regional cooperation and elimination of the provocators of extremism.



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1.1. Introduction

Pakistan has faced one of the most enduring and interwoven security issues to date, which has had a tremendous impact on internal stability, governance and socio economic development of Pakistan. Although there are major success stories of counterterrorism in the form of large scale military operations during the past. Still Pakistan is swept by the new resurgent waves of militant violence especially during the period 2020-2025. This renaissance has brought about some serious questions on the effectiveness of the current mechanisms of counterterrorism and about the military operations in the context of the emerging regional security environment (Israr & Khan, 2025). The Pakistani government has a counterterrorism system based on a According to the research of Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) signifies that the violent extremism and military struggle in Pakistan had its ups and downs or good or bad time during the period of 2020-2025 with a substantial increase in the terrorist violence or extremism after 2021. (Yousafi, Saeed, & Aftab, 2021) The contributions of key militant actors and terrorists organizations such as Tarik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-K and Baloch insurgent groups are also recognized as vital participants to security violations in specifically in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The volatility of the region and free movement across the borders have swelled the attacks by these groups.

National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) cites the fact that terrorism in Pakistan today has evolved to become decentralized and flexible militant's networks and it is increasingly challenging to eliminate this form of terrorism by merely applying conventional military tactics National Counter Terrorism Authority.

As a reaction to these dynamic threats Pakistan has changed its counterterrorism approach where large military operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad had been used to counterterrorism to the intelligence based and Inter Services Public Relations. All these have not taken terrorism to a rare phenomenon it is a

common incidence that has been brought about by a number of structural and regional factors. These are cross border militancy, social and economic inequalities, bad governance in the border areas as well as ideological extremism. (Munawar, Ali, & Shabbir, 2024).

The porous border of Pakistan Afghanistan has continued to be a giant security threat and has enabled movement and regrouping of the militant groups and this has complicated the counterterrorism operations. Therefore, it is critical to critically analyze the counterterrorism strategy and military operations of Pakistan in 2020-2025. (Khan, Khan, & Alam, 2021) This includes the reality of the shift to the intelligence led operations the effectiveness of the national institutions in the country which includes the NACTA and the impact of the regional developments especially Afghanistan on the internal security of the country Pakistan.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

According to the theory of introducing Realism in International relation theory by Sandrina Antunes and Isabel Camisã the concept of realism is founded on the principle that the state is the central player in an anarchic international system where there is no central authority that is able to control the behaviour of states. It highlights that states are rational and unitary actors whose actions are mainly motivated by the necessity to guarantee survival, security, and national interest. With realism international politics is competitive and prone to conflicts by the very nature of the absence of a global governing body compelling states to resort to self-help strategies to ensure their survival.

The theory also contends that power politics, military capability and strategic alliances are prime weapons employed by states to cope with threats and ensure stability in an uncertain international environment. Thus state behaviour is influenced not by the moral consideration but by practical considerations of security and survival.

1.3. Research Questions

- What are the effective measures of Pakistan's counterterrorism law enforcement agencies and policies (such as NACTA and military operations) to immediate security challenges and root causes of terrorism what future enhancement is necessary?
- How the move from extensive military actions to intelligence based operations specific and targeted anti-terrorism operations after Taliban takeover affected the level of terrorism national security in Pakistan?
- Why is there continuity and a resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan in the border socio-political and post 2021 security environment in Afghanistan?

1.4. Research Statement

There is a shift in Pakistan military operations and counterterrorism strategy towards terrorism post 2020.

1.5. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach which is used to explore the problem of this study. In the research the main research tool is qualitative content analysis which is a tool in conducting qualitative content analysis. Secondary data was used in the study and sources were books on relevant and credible academic books, peer reviewed journal articles, government publications, policy documents, official documents and think tank publications. The literature review and documentary analysis provide a critical analysis of the literature and documents that highlight the themes patterns and perspectives of the issue being studied. Analysis of the collected data will be done analytically and descriptively to answer the research objectives and answer the research questions.

1.6. Rationale

Terrorism has remained a constant security challenge for Pakistan, especially during 2020–2025 with growing armed threats and shifting regional landscape this study is essential it critically analyze the success of Pakistan's

transforming counterterrorism approach from large scale military operations to intelligence based strategies. It also demonstrates the influence of regional changes specifically in Afghanistan on internal stability or internal security conditions. The research identifies key policy and implementation gaps affecting long term stability and counter extremism efforts.

2.1. Literature Review

Basit (2024) analyzed that security scenario Pakistan after the change in political system in 2021 open the way for the revival of Tarik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He argued the armed groups regrouped and intensified or escalate the attacks across the border consequently weak border security and lack of collaborative efforts between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Zahid (2026) analyzed that the problem of counterterrorism in Pakistan has become interwoven with the instability in the region including operational and ideological ties between TTP and the Afghan Taliban. He also points out the cross border militancy and its lack of coordination in the regional counter terrorism network as a threat to Pakistan's internal security

Feyyaz (2024) analyzed Pakistan's shift towards Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) from large-scale military operations is an adaptive approach to the changing nature and method of militant operations. He thinks that IBOs have been an answer to making operational accuracy a boon but they have failed to take away structural problems that exist behind the phenomenon of terrorism such as the weakness of the government the extremism of ideologies etc.

Basit (2015) analyzed the National Action Plan (NAP) as the primary counterterrorism plan in Pakistan comprising of military legal and financial counterterrorism actions. But he says it is not effective in the long term in terms of stability unless there is good implementation and institutional integration.

Hussain & Jhandad (2025) analyzed the new threat of digital radicalization and conclude that social network and encrypted communication

networks are being increasingly used by radical groups for recruitment and messaging. The transition to the digital has made counterterrorism and intelligence more challenging. Since 2021 the Pakistan Afghanistan bilateral relations have also posed a continuing security dilemma as it has been difficult to have regional cooperation to combat terrorism.

Ali (2024) analyzed the socio economic aspects and the argument is that poverty, unemployment, and poor governance in conflict prone regions like KP and Balochistan can render them more susceptible to recruitment by extremists. He determines that peace cannot be sustained or maintained by military or intelligence, solutions if these aspects are not taken into contemplation.

2.2 Research Gap

There are still some research gaps on the identified areas as of this writing. First most studies are descriptive policy analysis studies rather than empirical studies or quantitative measures of effectiveness in terms of counterterrorism in 2020-2025. Second yet another gap in literature is the lack of thorough study of the impact of the Afghanistan situation caused by the post 2021 political set up on Pakistan's internal security. Thirdly there is little academic literature documenting institutional performance particularly related to the effectiveness of NACTA and inter agency coordination. Fourth the effectiveness of intelligence-based operations (IBOs) compared to the effects of large-scale military operations (LSMOs) are not evaluated for the long term over time. Fourth the effectiveness of intelligence-based operations (IBOs) to large scale military operations (LSMOs) is not assessed over time. Lastly there is no comprehensive study available which has comprehensively analysed all political, socio economic and security dimension of the phenomenon of terrorism in Pakistan together.

3.Data Analysis

3.1. Factors behind re-emergence and revival of terrorism.

3.1.1. Re-emergence of terrorism in Pakistan

The analysis of terrorism trends in Pakistan between 2020-2025 shows a major revival of terrorist activity in Pakistan following the return of Taliban in Afghanistan. It indicates a surge in the terrorist activities of Fitna Al Khawarij from mid-2021 in Pakistan. In 2021 268 terrorist attacks took place. In 2022, 365 terrorist attack were reported that resulted in the killing of 971 persons including 379 security forces officers and men in 2023 the terrorist attacks skyrocketed to 527 and resulted in the killing of 1502 people including 532 security security force (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). Till July 2024 a total of 397 terrorist attacks were noted. According to the security point of view the year 2024 is the worst since it killed more than 950 including 307 of the security forces during the first seven months of the year. (Khan & Khan, 2026)

According to data been 699 attacks by terrorists in 2025. Murders were more than 42pc of the victims were security personnel. As many as 699 terrorist attacks occurred in the country in the year (Khan, 2026). The fatalities in this violence totalled at least 1,034 and an injured of 1,366 indicating a growing trend of militancy since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in 2021. In the backdrop of rising tensions on the border and emergence of militant groups KP is now under a broader security threat as new tactics are being adopted by the militants in the province it adds. The data showed that security and law enforcement personnel received over 42pc of all terrorism related fatalities with 437 of them being these individuals. Civilians were also significantly affected the loss of life of 354 non-combatants. IN the meantime, 243 militants have been killed some in isolated incidents some as a result of retaliatory shelling by forces over some of the terrorist attacks. (Khan & Khan, 2026).

A significant pattern identified the period 2020-2025 was territorial concentration of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. In 2025 the province had the second greatest number of terrorist attacks with 413 incidences. In all these violent events 581 deaths and 698 injuries were

reported. (Tahir & Jadoon, 2025).The uprising in Balochistan had strengthened. There were 254 militant attacks in the Balochistan in 2025 resulting in 419 deaths and injuries to 607 people (Verma, Baloch, & Valle, 2025)

Sindh province 21 terror attacks 16 of which were reported in Karachi two in Shikarpur and one each in Hyderabad and Jacobabad and Jamshoro. Fourteen people were killed and 17 more injured in these incidents. (Center for Research & Security Studies,2025) There were four cases of terror attack in 2025 in Punjab which decreased from 11 in 2024.A total of five people died (4 militants and 1 police) and two policemen were injured in these attacks. In another attack 12 people were killed by a suicide attack outside the complex of judicial building of Islamabad district and sessions courts. This attack was reportedly carried out by the splinter group of banned TTP named Jamaatul Ahrar.Three attacks were reported in Gilgit Baltistan two of which involved attacks against a district in Diamir and the other in Gilgit (Khan & Khan, 2026) Three of the security workers were killed including two Scouts and one from the Frontier Corps and six were injured Despite the government's assurance that Afghan soil will not be used against any country by terrorists hiding on Afghan soil the Taliban Government failed to stop the terrorists of Fitna Al Khawari from doing terrorist activities in Pakistan.

During the regime of the Afghan Taliban in the US and NATO they were more in line with Pakistan and some of their senior officials were residing in Pakistan. The results show that although there was a marked increase in the number of terrorism incidence mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan it was not limited to these regions. In 2025 there were 21 terrorist attacks in Sindh mainly in the city of Karachi and four in Punjab (Khan & Khan, 2024) Some incidents against security personnel in GB were also reported in sporadic incidents.

3.2. The role of national institutions, NACTA and military operations in counterterrorism

3.2.1 Pakistan Counterterrorism Strategies

Pakistan has been following a series of counterterrorism policies to combat terrorism militancy and extremism. Strategies include socio economic development, border management, legal changes, intelligence based action and military action. The main task is to eliminate terrorist networks and guarantee country's peace and stability.

3.2.2. National Counter Terrorism Authority

National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) is the focal point of the coordination of national policies in countering terrorism and extremism. It was first created as an administrative body in the Ministry of Interior in 2008 and made legally and institutionally independent by the NACTA Act of 2013 giving it an explicit mandate. As per its mandate, NACTA is required to collect and process intelligence information regarding terror attacks, prepare national counterterrorism policies, coordinate between the Federal and Provincial police and monitor the implementation of counterterrorism action plans such as the National Action Plan (NAP). It also recommends changes to the policy and research and international co-operation in counterterrorism to the federal government. In the larger picture, NACTA plays a crucial coordination role to coordinate the national response to the terrorism in Pakistan.

3.2.3. National Action Plan

The National Action Plan (NAP), 2014 is the overall Counterterrorism policy of Pakistan which was initiated after the attack to the Army Public School, Peshawar. It was prepared in consultation with both the civil and military authorities in response to the problems of terror and extremism in the country. There are 20 measures in the plan which include both hard and soft measures to combat terrorist movements and consolidation of state authority and the removal of extremism. It seeks to ban, to cut off the money and communication links of the militants and strengthen institutions such as the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) (Wahab, 2023) It also addresses issues on intelligence

coordination, regulation of madrassas, controlling hate speech, judicial reforms for speedy trials, managing the security of the borders, registration of Afghan refugees and prevention of misuse of internet and social media.

3.2.4. Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) (2020–2025)

In the period of 2020 to 2025, Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) have been an integral part of the Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts. In the transition from large-scale military operations to intelligence led and precision based counterterrorism operations to disrupt the decentralized network of militants, Pakistan has taken slow steps. They are carried out with the activities of the intelligence and law enforcement agencies and military forces that are deployed for identification, tracking and elimination of high value targets of the terrorists (Khalid, 2020). This change has been influenced by the changing nature of terror that has led to non-state actors acting in what are more and more disorganized and mobile settings, creating less effective conventional large-scale operations. Intelligence based methods have thus increased the accuracy in execution, minimised unnecessary civilian casualties, and increased the speed of response in counterterrorism operations.

3.2.5. The Border Management and Security Strategy

The management of Pakistan's borders has always been an integral part of national security/counterterrorism policy, especially Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and thus a specific concern of Pakistan's military. This border is porous and has been a security challenge in the past because it has been a site for militants, weapons and illegal cross-border activities. Meanwhile in Pakistan, the country has beefed up its border security through the fence installations, surveillance and security checkpoints, military deployment and monitoring measures (Oztig, 2018). The steps are aimed at curbing illegal crossing of the border, infiltration of militant groups. Post 2021 regional security situation has resulted in more uncertainty in Afghanistan,

which has increased the necessity for management of the borders, intelligence sharing and border control measures for ensuring security stability in Afghanistan.

3.3. Transformation from large scale military operations to intelligence led and target based approach

3.3.1. Operation Zarb-e-Azb

Zarb-e-Azb was the highest achievement of Pakistan's war against terrorism that was introduced in June 2014. The operation against the militant safe havens in North Waziristan, a centre for various militant groups that includes the Al-Qaeda and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was started to abolish militants. The ground operation and air raids were carried out in synchronized manner with systematic approach in order to target the terrorist infrastructure and network. The success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb had weakened the militants running the organisations and to some extent the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan had declined. The exercise also emphasized need for intelligence sharing and regional action coordination and defense strategies in countering terrorism (Munawar, Ali, & Shabbir, 2024)

3.3.2. Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad

On the heels of success in the previous military operations to secure the situation and eliminate the remaining terrorist groups and their presence in the country Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad was launched in February 2017. The method of operations for Radd-ul-Fasaad was different from the previous operations which targeted specific areas Radd-ul-Fasaad was a country wide operation and the methodology was to engage military and civilian law enforcement agencies. The emphasis of the operation was on intelligence based operations (IBOs) to detect and terrorism. It also highlighted on de-radicalisation activities for combating the extremist ideology and also made mention of the strengthening of the security of the border to stop infiltration across the border. (Munawar, Ali, & Shabbir, 2024).

3.3.3. Counterterrorism operations in Pakistan post 2021

Since 2021 Pakistan's counterterror Pakistan activities have increased markedly and become more intelligent and exact in targeting militant groups. Because of the escalating security pressure the operations increased every year and reached 10s of thousands each year by 2024-2025. The operations were primarily against Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other extremist groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and were part of a brand new Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad and Operation Azm-e-Istehkam.

3.3.4. Operation Azm -e-Istehkam

Unlike Operation Zarb-e-Azb this operation was of Targeted nature which in 2024 began. It did not cause a disruption of large population but it helped in the struggle against extremism with the participation of Focus thus improving the law and order situation in the country in general and KP and BL in particular. This Operation was intended to raise the socio economic condition of the Country. This operation for some extent brought a positive news to the Condition of the Country. In this operation stability of the country is First priority of all the stake holders. This is a collaboration of the both armed and civil armed and intelligence agencies (Israr & Khan, 2025).

3.3.5. Intelligence based operations post 2020

The introduction of the Intelligence based operations (IBOs) after 2020 was one of the most prominent aspects of Pakistan's counterterrorism policy. The previous military operations focused on major land based operations and clearing but IBOs would be introduced as targeted and information led operations that would target specific militant individuals and networks and hideouts. Intelligence gathering was a key requirement for such operations carried out by means of intelligence equipment, informants intercepts and inter agency coordination between the Pakistan Army the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs), Frontier Corps, Rangers and police and other civilian agencies (Javed, Shafiq, & Ahmad, 2025).

The key objectives were to identify and neutralise threats by terrorists before they could attack with minimal loss of life and displacement of civilians.

Research studies describe this evolution of terrorism as a need for flexible and technologically sophisticated counterterrorism responses on the part of security agencies such as real time sharing of intelligence and swift responses. (Khan, Khan, & Alam, 2021). In August 2021 the establishment of Taliban regime in Afghanistan had a major impact on the security landscape in Pakistan. The collapse of government in Afghanistan incidence of terrorist attacks rose in Pakistan specially by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Allegedly militants were able to regroup and attack Pakistani security forces and civilians in border areas. This led to increased intelligence operations in the areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan particularly in the districts of North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Bajaur, Bannu, Tank and Lower Dir. The security forces have been working on specific localities to stop militant hideouts foil infiltration and uproot networks which are linked with terrorist outfits. According to academic sources these are operations which were required to quell the growth of militants in border areas and urban centrer (Mahmood & Shah, 2023).

Many intelligence operations went on in continuation of Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad after 2020. It was started in 2017 but extended to a country wide intelligence operation to neutralise the remaining terrorist threats in the country and ensure internal stability. The security agencies were able to undertake thousands of IBOs in Pakistan for the purpose of finding out militants, arms disrupting funds and arresting facilitators (Javed, Shafiq, & Ahmad, 2025).The Pakistani security agencies as a response have stepped up their cyber surveillance, communication intercepting and digital intelligence analysis.

Researchers claim that IBOs were more effective than large scale operations in combating decentralized militant groups because it enabled security forces to take quick targeted action against specific threats. In these operations the

requirement of massively deploying troops and civilian's displacement was reduced as compared to earlier military operations like Operation Rah-e-Rast and Operation Zarb-e-Azb (Khan, Khan, & Alam, 2021).IBOs can be seen as a short term security measure which will help to disrupt terrorist activities but a comprehensive reform covering many sectors including border management, political reconciliation, development, education reform, anti-extremism others is necessary to establish sustainable peace's (Khan, Khan, & Alam, 2021)

3.3.6. Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy (2020-2025)

Analysis of the counterterrorism strategy of Pakistan from 2020 to 2025 shows that there's a substantial change in the direction of strategy from reconciliation to intelligence based and preventive counterterrorism. This shift is attributed to the insurgents largely after the resurgence of militant activities in the wake of the Taliban return to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 and the revival of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) along with other Baloch insurgents. In the first phase (2020-2021) the focus was on the dialogue and reconciliation process with the help of peace talks and amnesty with TTP (Ahmad & Karikalan, 2024).

The findings indicate Pakistan has taken extra efforts in its counterterrorism policy since 2021.The country's recent introduction of a new anti-insurgency/counterterrorism initiative across the country namely Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, is one such step in this direction. The socioeconomic interventions were included in the general framework of the National Action Plan (NAP) and the method was distinct from other operations in that socioeconomic interventions were used rather than military interventions.

During the latter part in 2024 the National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy was introduced. The policy suggested a new door opening that would lead to a whole of society approach which emphasized DE radicalization, peace education, community engagement and the prevention of extremist narrative (Sohail, 2024)

This latest study also provides a good example of the increasing significance of financial counter terrorism over the years. The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) stepped up the enforcement of Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter Financing of Terrorism (CFT) laws. Steps have been taken to stamp out Hawala and Hundi system and to break the finances of the terror network and destroy the Hawala and Hundi system (Mali, Shah, & Qadri, 2025).

The results showed that there were still serious problems with the policies. The resurgence of TTP was attributed to advanced weapons that have been left behind after the departure of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan as well as sophisticated equipment. Left behind U.S. and NATO weapons and equipment from Afghanistan helped TTP to re-emerge (Fatima & Kugelman, 2026). Furthermore, in some areas of KP major kinetic operations and displacement took place which led to conflicts and tension between the security institutions and the local communities affecting security goals and popular support.

3.3.7. Security and intelligence agencies role

The findings showed that the government of Pakistan's security and intelligence agencies in the past five years (2020-2025) have adopted intelligence based counter terrorism approach more than ever before since the resurgence of militancy activities in Afghanistan since the resumption of Taliban rule. Intelligence Based operations (IBOs) and Border Security were highlighted as were specific counter terrorism operations due to the growing security threat from TTP and Baloch insurgent groups. Other areas of concern reflected in the analysis were issues related to cyber security digital surveillance and financial intelligence to fight extremist networks and illicit funds (Admin, 2026). New technologies also enhanced threat detection capabilities and increased the effectiveness of operations. The militant violence continues suggesting intelligence and security efforts alone are not sufficient and calls for a comprehensive strategy that must include governance reform socioeconomic development and regional

cooperation.

The study revealed that terrorism has been a serious threat to the security of Pakistan in the years 2020-25. After 2021 terrorist incidents increased particularly in different parts of the country mirroring the revival in militant activities. The terrorists were mostly against the armed forces government offices and civilians with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-K and Baloch insurgent groups as the chief perpetrators of the violence.

The results indicate a significant change in the counterterrorism approach in Pakistan in the period covered by this study. The Government had also increasingly resorted to Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) to detect and deal with terrorist threats in contrast to previous years that had been based mainly on military operations. It helped to enhance operational efficiency and facilitated more targeted and accurate measures against militant groups by security agencies.

The study also showed how significant the role of security and intelligence agencies in coordinating operations and sharing intelligence in combating terrorist activities is. While it has made strides in its operations militants have had the luxury of reorganizing and adapting to new threats and opportunities.

The study finds that developments in Afghanistan, since 2021, have significantly contributed to the security environment of Pakistan. The resurgence of the terrorist incidents in Pakistan are due to cross border militancy, movement of militants and regional instability.

The study also showed that the National Action Plan (NAP), NACTA and border security measures had a positive effect on counterterrorism but that institutional coordination and implementation of policy and the presence of extremist ideologies had a negative impact that made them less efficient.

In the broad spectrum of counterterrorism, the findings indicate that Pakistan has done relatively well on tactical aspects (2020-2025). But for long term success it is imperative to have a

multifaceted response which includes security measures as well as institutional strengthening, good governance, socio economic development and counter extremism

4.1. Application of the Theory

This theoretical approach is very pertinent to the counterterrorism approach and military Operations of Pakistan between 2020 and 2025. In realist perspective the Pakistani Government is faced with a very unstable regional environment which threatens its internal security by Threats such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-K, and Baloch insurgent groups. The 2021 developments in Afghanistan further boosted this kind of insecurity by creating a power Vacuum in the region that enabled militant groups to reorganize and enhance cross border Operations. To counter these threats, the counterterrorism policy of Pakistan is characterized by Realist principles since the state is focused on nation survival and security in terms of self-help Mechanisms. The application of state power to abolish internal threats and reinstate stability Can be observed in large scale military operations like Radd-ul-Fasaad and Azm-e-Istehkam as Well as targeted operations based on intelligence gathering. Furthermore, state power is the tool Which should be used by the institutions like National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) And the armed forces as the means of controlling internal order and ensuring a national Sovereignty. Realistically such actions are logical reactions to an anarchical regional setting in Which states could not count on external forces to ensure their safety. Therefore, according to Realism the counterterrorism strategy developed by Pakistan is a process of continuous Adaption of state power to new threat so that the state can survive in a conflict prone and Unstable international and regional system.

5.1. Conclusion

The study aimed to examine the policy and strategies of counterterrorism in Pakistan from 2020 to 2025 and evaluate the success of these policies and strategies in dealing with the new security threats. It demonstrates the level of

resurgence in the attack of terrorism in Pakistan during this period particularly since the political development in Afghanistan in 2021. The militant groups such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-K, and Baloch insurgent groups remained to be a threat to the internal security environment of the country. The policy of counter terrorism in Pakistan had shifted from the big military operation to intelligence based or targeted operation. Security institutions like the army, intelligence services, police and the provincial Counter Terrorism Departments have played a crucial role in the prevention of a lot of acts of terrorism and in the stifling of militant network. Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) were effective and precise and were now a part of the Pakistan counterterrorism campaign. However even with all these achievements the results indicate there is tactical success but no strategic success in the fight against terrorism conducted by counterterrorism efforts. The resurgence and re-emergence of the extremist groups suggest that security operations is not enough to bring an end to terrorism. Cross border militancy, extremist ideologies and a lack of coordination and consistency in institutional implementation of the National Action Plan continued to impact the overall policy effectiveness. Further the research emphasizes the significant contribution of the regional developments towards security in Pakistan. The situation of security in Afghanistan after 2021 played an important role in the activities of militant groups outside the country and have increased the security worries in Pakistan. This eventually led to the increased role of cooperation exchanging information and improving border management in the framework of national security policy. The study shows that Pakistan's counterterrorism operations in the study period (2020-2025) have succeeded in some very successful operations but yet have not yielded long and sustainable security results. More than military and intelligence operations the success of counterterrorism operations depends on strengthening of institutions governance and

root cause analysis of extremism and national and regional cooperation. For achieving Pakistan's everlasting peace, stability and national security a comprehensive and balanced approach will be a must.

6.1. Recommendations

- Enhance Intelligence Sharing between Military, Intelligence and Civilian Police.
- Improve NACTA's institutional legitimacy, technical capacity and resource and finances.
- Improve Border Management with more surveillance, fencing and biometrics.
- Carry out rapid implementation and enforcement of NAP at all the provinces.
- Increase size of De-radicalization Programs for vulnerable communities and at risk youth.
- Enhance cyber counter terrorism (CC-T) ability to watch internet extremist propaganda and recruitment.
- Promote cooperation at regional level to address the challenges of cross border militancy and cooperation with neighbouring countries in intelligence sharing.
- Target Socio Economic Drivers of Extremism for reduction through education, jobs, community development program.

6.2. Limitations

For the present study the secondary data was collected from academic journals, reports and official documents. There was no classified security and intelligence information available. Data may not be complete due to inconsistencies in data collection and reporting across the different terrorism databases. The study only discusses Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts from 2020 to 2025. Primary data collection was also not possible as there was lack of availability of relevant authorities for interviewing. In addition there were some government documents that were not readily accessible limiting analysis.

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